



September 2012

Dear stakeholder:

It's hard to believe that summer is coming to a close. There certainly wasn't much downtime, but I appreciated the opportunity to meet with many of you in various meetings and events these past couple of months.

This month, the Department of Human Services is focusing on school readiness – including the benefits of scheduling an annual physical with a family or pediatric physician, and requesting vision and hearing screenings - all of which is covered under [NJ FamilyCare](#) and other health insurers. Also, food insecurity, which impacts every facet of life, can lead to poor physical health, learning problems and can stress one's mental health. The [NJ SNAP](#) food assistance program can provide support to families in need. In addition, parents' awareness of [mental health and addiction](#) issues is crucial – especially for college-age students who may experience depression or exhibit behaviors that raise concerns about substance use or abuse. Finally, and probably most significant to the success of students, is the involvement of family. [Child support](#) is a key anti-poverty measure; certainly custodial parents who receive consistent child support payments are better able to provide the basics for their children and avoid the need for State-subsidized social services.

This past August, the Department collected through employee donations nearly [100 backpacks](#) that were filled with school uniforms, school supplies and other necessities for children in the Trenton area. The generosity of staff was greatly appreciated by [HomeFront](#) and the Never Give Up Foundation, which serve families in Mercer County with the help of dedicated staff and volunteers.

In September, we'll continue to highlight community programs for seniors and individuals with disabilities by raising awareness of fall prevention strategies for seniors, and we'll participate in ribbon cutting and groundbreaking ceremonies for new group homes in South Jersey. We'll also recognize the commitment and devoted work of our State's [Direct Support Providers](#) at an event in New Brunswick and convene the first meeting of the [Interagency Council on Homelessness](#).

Last month, we emphasized community based health care opportunities for seniors and people with disabilities. Deputy Commissioner Lowell Arye [visited](#) Meadow Lake Retirement Center in West Windsor to view an art exhibit featuring handmade works of art by seniors in Mercer County. He also [toured Parker Adult Day](#) Health Services [in Piscataway](#) to observe how seniors in need of medical support can continue to live in the community with community-based agency support. He also attended an assistive device demonstration in Brick Township where senior citizens [learned to use various tools](#) to become computer literate and did a [radio show](#) with WNJC1360 to discuss the various senior programs available through the Department.

Finally, I hope you had a chance to read my [op-ed](#) about this Administration's commitment to community living for people with developmental disabilities.

I continue, along with members of my executive staff, to meet with stakeholders regularly to remain connected to your interests and concerns.

Regards,

*Jennifer Velez*

Commissioner